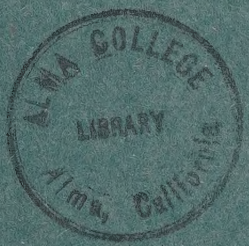
THE TRAINING OF THE WILL

& OTHER ESSAYS ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

By JUDITH F. SMITH



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THE TRAINING OF THE WILL

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THE TRAINING OF THE WILL

WHEN God created man in his own image he set his feet on the straight path which leads to heaven, and said to him: "This is the way, walk ye in it;" and the means whereby man walks—either to heaven or to hell—is free-will. No power can take him to either place against his will.

"Free-will," says Fr. Maher, S.J., ". . . may be described as *the faculty of inclining towards or striving after some object intellectually apprehended as good;* but, viewed strictly as a free power, it may be defined as the *capability of self-determination. . . . By Free-will* or *Moral Freedom,* then, we understand that property in virtue of which a rational agent, when all the conditions required to elicit a volition are present, can either put forth or abstain from that volition."* In other words, it is the power of deliberate choice, the ruling faculty. This being so, it is obvious

* *Psychology: Empirical and Rational,* p. 395.

that the training of the will is the most important factor in moral education. If the will be perfectly trained, the man is perfectly educated, for the will is directed by *ideas,* and inspired by the *emotions* which those ideas call up; hence the training of the will entails the perfecting of the understanding and the affections.

Tennyson sums up the educationist's aim in a line:

"We needs must love the highest when we see it."

If we show the ideal clearly to our children, so that it is "intellectually apprehended as good," they will strive towards it. But words do not necessarily convey an idea, and an idea does not of necessity command assent. An illustration or two will show the interaction of ideas, emotions, and will.

We make many deliberate choices every day, in small things if not in great, and in each case an idea rouses an emotion which impels us to action. For example, an acquaintance recommends a book to you. He describes it so vividly that he rouses your interest in it, and you put it on your library list; or his description rouses your repulsion, and you make a mental note *not* to read it; or, again,

he describes it vaguely and in such a dull way that you get no clear idea of the book at all, and forget all about it the next minute. Now, the vivid idea roused an emotion, but in the second example it was not the one intended, because your acquaintance was unfamiliar with your interests. On the other hand, the vague idea roused no emotion and resulted in no action. Thus we see that an idea must be vivid to inspire an emotion, and it must be one which will call up the required emotion if it is to rouse the desired action.

To take another example: you are walking in an unfamiliar place and come to cross-roads. On asking a countryman whither they lead, he replies that one brings you to the high-road and the other to a wood full of primroses. You love flowers and choose the latter way, but the man calls after you that the path runs through a field in which there is sometimes a savage bull. This new idea probably rouses a new and stronger emotion, and you take the dull road after all.

Besides the three noble motive powers of faith, hope, and love, there is a series of emotions, experienced by all men, because they form an integral part of the warp and woof of human nature. These fundamental instincts with their corre-

sponding emotions will lead to degraded or exalted actions according to the ideas which inspire them. Thus, there is moral cowardice or noble fear of evil; repulsion towards good or towards wrong-doing; savage anger or righteous indignation; unwholesome curiosity or that reverent wonder which Aristotle says is the beginning of philosophy; there is emulation, which leads to vain-glory and envy or to a magnificent striving to surpass oneself; and there is subjection, which may be a mean cringing for unworthy ends or a proud submission to rightful authority, the attitude which Browning describes as

> "That stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too."

Then there is elation, which may be mere misplaced self-confidence or that splendid emotion defined as "thoroughly to believe in yourself when you are thorough."

All these emotions, with their resultant tendencies to action, belong to the animal side of man and are conducive to the preservation of his natural life; but when glorified by grace they are no less a part of the spiritual man, helping towards his supernatural end—the salvation of his soul.

Whether these emotions shall function upwards or downwards depends upon the dominant ideas of the mind ; therefore the aim of moral education is to supply the requisite ideas and so ensure that the will shall choose rightly.

We have seen that ideas must be presented vividly and must be *linked to the interests of the hearer,* if they are to command attention. Here the teacher of religion has an immense advantage over the teacher of secular subjects, for interest in religion never needs to be artificially stimulated : it is there already if we only know how to awaken it.

Every child is intensely interested in himself and his own personal affairs. He has no difficulty in believing that he is the centre of the universe—so natural a belief, indeed, that in some persons it is only eradicated after long years, if then. But the religious educator can make good use of this egoism ; he need not uproot this deep-seated faith, but, on the contrary, encourage it and build upon it, only in a spiritual sense. "The one to the one" expresses the summit of Christian attainment, and, with minds enlightened by the counsel to "become as little children" from him "with whom first and last are equal, saint . . . and

little child," we see that the sublimest thought, reached by the saint after long years in the Way of Perfection, is after all merely the starting-point of the babe. The child's natural egoism simply accepts the stupendous economy of salvation, whereby the universe is a trifle as compared with his soul, and the undivided attention of the Creator is given to his personal welfare. It is no matter of surprise to him that, as Francis Thompson reminds us,

> ". . . Heaven hath no frown
> When thou to thee pluck'st down,
> Strong clod!
> The neck of God."

To gain and hold the child's interest, therefore, present religion as an intensely personal matter—the love of God for *him,* heaven as *his* home, daily effort necessary for his eternal happiness. As the child develops, egoism will give place to altruism, and the more perfect love will blossom; but a measure of egoism is not only permitted but actually enjoined the Christian by the amazing fact that not only are God's interests his, but his interests are likewise God's.

In telling the young child stories of God's love and care, of the happiness of heaven, of what God

wishes us to do that we may be happy for ever with him, we are training the emotion of fear on its positive side. To love God is to fear to lose him. We flee from danger in order to preserve life; where there is no love of life there is no fear of death—indeed, death is even courted. Apoc. xxi shows us how to make use of the emotion of fear—twenty-six verses of appealing beauty, followed by one verse of solemn warning, the whole force of which is derived from the desire of attainment already aroused.

The hot-tempered, quarrelsome child is a pupil to be cherished; we may expect much from him. Strong emotions presuppose strong actions. The root of anger is hatred of imperfection, of anything recognized as evil. The positive side of this emotion is love for a lofty ideal; it is simply a question of correcting the ideas which inspire it. The Apostle of Love was an extremely hot-tempered man, as our Lord's name for him shows; but whereas at one time a personal insult to his Master and himself roused his flaming anger, we hear no lifted voice on Calvary or on Patmos; his sense of values had deepened immeasurably. Yet the old emotion was not *dead;* it still showed in righteous indignation when occasion warranted.

We hear it ringing in his reproof to the bishop who had lost sight of a convert: "I left a fine keeper of a brother's soul!"

To a child prone to anger we must give right ideas of what it is worth while to be angry about. Give him a high ideal, fill his mind with tales of chivalry. For the strongest weapon is an appeal to that emotion which is always allied with anger —emulation, urging to combativeness. Encourage such a child to quarrel, but *to quarrel with himself;* fill him with "divine discontent"; give him standards whereby to measure his own shortcomings; show him our Lord as the Hero of heroes, emphasize the heroic qualities of the saints, both of the Old and of the New Dispensation. Show the child by fine examples that greater is "he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities"; enlist this strong emotion in the service of self-control. When the child fails, let your blame be incipient praise: "That is not worthy of you;" "*You* can do much better than this."

Then there is the child with the strong "positive self-instinct," as some psychologists term that self-assertiveness which is prompted by an elated sense of personal power. Such a child is

a born leader. A certain nun was in charge of a week-end retreat for children. Among them was one with a reputation for insubordination. Presently the nun noticed that this child was inciting the whole roomful to disorder, so, calling her, she said quietly: "Please keep order for me for a time; I have some writing to do." The child took her place at the nun's desk, and the latter sat at her writing-table with her back to the children *and never looked round.* Perfect order reigned in the room. Moreover, for the rest of that retreat, and in all ensuing ones where she was present, that child constituted herself the nun's right hand.

Instead of attempting to crush a strong instinct, this wise nun *had given it a right direction by inculcating a new idea.* That child had always seen herself *at war* with authority; now she saw herself *at one* with it, and perfect self-expression along right lines became possible. Further, the valuable emotion of subjection, hitherto weak, would be able to develop properly, because, being herself on the side of order, she could now respect authority.

We may note the use here made of auto-suggestion. M. Coué has reminded this generation

of the value of the imagination in the training of the will. The rebel child saw herself as a law-abiding person, and straightway acted up to her new vision. The Catholic Church, of course, has always made great use of the imagination. She provides a mental and moral and physical environment calculated to suggest to her children that they are citizens of no mean city, and as such should walk worthy of their high calling.

While we never forget that Christianity must always entail earnest effort—it has been well called "the religion of upward striving"—we may yet remind ourselves of the divine encouragement: "Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom;" and may it not be that this highly strung, nerve-racked generation needs rather to be shown its heirship (with the corollary of *noblesse oblige*) than to be reminded continually that strait is the gate and narrow is the way?

The Christian life is a life of action, and every act is the expression of a living idea; therefore in all doctrinal teaching the primary motive is the inculcation of ideas which will find expression in the life. We note this in manuals on mental

prayer : a meditation is made in order to arouse an affection or emotion, which must result in a resolution, and it is important that this resolution should promptly take effect. If one may hazard a generalization, secular teaching is concerned mainly with facts, but doctrinal teaching with the interpretation of facts—*i.e.*, ideas. The ultimate aim of the teacher of religious truth is action, ideas expressed in life, not mere mental storage. In preparing an instruction with this end in view, he considers (*a*) what specific act he desires to elicit, (*b*) what emotion will inspire that action, (*c*) what idea will rouse that emotion. Then he has to consider the best method of presenting this idea, having regard to the interests and mental capacity of his audience.

In this connection it is well to remember our Lord's warning : "If you *know* these things, you shall be blessed if you *do* them ;" and again : "Why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ?" A knowledge of religious truth which does not stir the heart—*i.e.*, rouse the emotions—is useless, but emotions which do not result in actions are worse than useless. In "The Statue and the Bust" Browning gives us a poignant picture of what it means *to fail to*

act, contrasting such failure with action at its noblest :

"Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of his,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way thro' the world to this."

THE PRESENTATION OF IDEAS

EVERY speaker and every hearer knows from bitter experience that words which accurately express an idea to the former do not necessarily convey it to the latter. There are at least three possible reasons for this : the terms in which the idea is expressed may be unintelligible to the hearer, the idea itself may be beyond his mental grasp, or it may simply be that he finds it uninteresting and so pays no attention and makes no effort to understand.

The teacher standing before his class is, as it were, at one end of a telephone with the individual child at the other. "Tommy, are you there?" he says in effect with his opening sentence. Most of us have known at times what it means to get no response. Now, it is obvious that we cannot ring up Tommy unless we know his number ; but, happily for us, every Tommy is in this telephone directory. Tommy's number is found in Tommy's interests.

When the presentation of an idea arouses in-

terest, the hearer's attention is at once fixed; when it arouses no interest, the attention wanders. Attention is the electric wire which conveys current from the battery of the speaker's mind to illuminate the hearer's. Unless the connection is effected, the best efforts of the teacher are wasted.

To be interesting, a new idea must be in some way associated with ideas which are already in the mind, with the *interests* of the hearer. The word "interest" has come to mean "amusement" with some people, a light tickling of the mental palate; but in the sense in which we are using it it means a living relation between the mind and the idea. Interests are the pores of the mind, through which it breathes and grows. Or you may liken them to the soil of the mind in which ideas germinate. The more interests a person has, the more ideas he can receive; and the more ideas he receives, the more interests he develops; whereas a mind with few interests narrows and hardens and tends to lose those which it once possessed: "For he that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, that also which he hath shall be taken away from him."

An idea is not a form of words: it is a living

thought. If an idea is presented in a formula which means nothing to the mind of the hearer, it is as if you wrapped up a packet of seed and put it away on a shelf. If it is to grow, a living thing must be given suitable environment; therefore an idea must be planted, not stored. When we speak of a "well-stored mind," we mean it in the same sense as a "well-stocked garden." A new idea must be related to the interests of the mind—*i.e.*, planted in the soil—then it will spring up and bear fruit. Hence it follows that it is necessary to understand the soil you propose to cultivate—*i.e.*, what ideas are already predominant in your hearer's mind—(*a*) because you must relate the new idea to those in possession; (*b*) because a new idea is at once coloured by pre-existing ones, as white gauze hung before some deep hue will seem to take its tint; (*c*) because ideas, especially religious ideas, develop in ordered sequence.

Suppose you made the statement "God is our Father" to three children of five years old whose circumstances in life are very different. The first child is nobody's child, reared in a workhouse, unloved; the statement is simply meaningless to him; he knows nothing about a father, he has

never heard of God. The second child comes from a brutal home, where mother and children go in fear of their lives when the man is drunk ; the statement is worse than meaningless to him. The third child has tender, loving parents ; he understands what you imply.

It is by no means unusual to confuse *a definite statement* with *a definite idea*. Yet it is obvious that the two things are quite distinct. To memorize the catechism is useless to a child if the underlying ideas are not living realities. If it be memorized in chorus, the class all shouting the words together, the result may be indeed disastrous. We can all of us remember some verse learnt in childhood which never made sense because a word or two had been wrongly apprehended. It is bad when such valuable formularies as those of the catechism are rendered meaningless ; it is worse when they appear ridiculous. If you use an instrument for a purpose for which it is unsuited, you are likely to spoil it and to injure yourself. When a child learns the catechism by heart before he has grasped its meaning, he will probably feel distaste or boredom, and these feelings may even colour his whole attitude to religious instruction in after-life. But in their proper place

—as the crystallized summary of a lesson—these doctrinal formulas are quite invaluable.

In secular education the subject is not necessarily interesting in itself, in which case the teacher has to connect it with some subject in which the pupil *is* interested. But the necessity of attaching outside interests to his subject-matter need never arise for the teacher of religion. "The most natively interesting object to a man is his own personal self and his fortunes," says Professor James. "We accordingly see that the moment a thing becomes connected with the fortunes of the self, it forthwith becomes an interesting thing."* Now, religion is essentially a matter "connected with the fortunes of the self," with its all-important and eternal fortunes, indeed. Consequently the teacher of religion is quite sure of being able to get into contact with the mind of his hearer. The connection is there. It remains for him to find it. He must present the Faith in such a way that the child realizes its personal significance for himself.

It will always be found that without interest there is no attention, and consequently no progress in knowledge. A schoolgirl whose terminal

* *Talks to Teachers*, p. 95.

report showed that she had made little effort in her history class was asked why she had not done better work. "It doesn't interest me," she replied. Again, a girl of twenty, the daughter of earnest, cultured Catholic parents, on the sudden death of a friend, begged for an explanation of the doctrine of purgatory. She knew nothing about it, she said, and the loss of her loved one had brought the desire for knowledge of the state of the departed. Yet she had been educated in convent schools. She must have been taught the catechism in such a way that it failed to interest her, and she had paid no real attention to the instruction.

We have seen that an idea is a living thing which must be *sown* by the teacher and *received* by the hearer. In order that this result may be obtained the teacher must present the idea (1) in relation to his hearer's interests ; (2) vividly, with arresting force ; (3) with prestige behind it. Still, at times, "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Every advertiser knows the value of this method. An attractive picture catches your eye, a story engages your attention, and you find yourself earnestly advised in your own interest to buy

somebody's cigarettes, this counsel reinforced by a list of eminent persons who state that they would on no account smoke any other.

Where the interest is very strong or the prestige very great, there is sometimes sufficient stimulus to arrest attention without vivid presentation, as when a man listens to a dry lecture on some subject which interests him profoundly, or which is delivered by someone whom he greatly respects. But better results will always be obtained when vivid presentation is used, and it is imperative that it should not be lacking when dealing with young children or untutored minds. He who instructs in the Catholic Faith, however, has an incalculable advantage over any teacher of another subject. The interest is there, waiting to be awakened; the prestige is there—the Church is behind him; the method is there, for he who bade that Church feed his lambs and his sheep has shown us by his own example how best to do so.

For children, and all simple-minded persons unused to much thought, ideas must be given concrete form, abstract truth must be displayed in action. A nine-year-old schoolboy stated with pride that he now knew what "bluff" meant. "Tell me," said an aunt, deeply interested in the

way in which he would explain anything so abstract. "I can't *tell* you," he answered, "but I can tell you a story," and thereupon eagerly related an instance of soldierly "bluff" in the face of grave danger, which had evidently made a great impression on his mind. The same boy indicated another educational truth by remarking that he liked history when he could *see* it.

When teaching the unlettered multitude, children in mind, our blessed Lord always presented abstract truth in concrete form, and in the terms of his hearers' daily experience, intimately related to their native interests: the sower, the mustard seed, the leaven, the lost sheep, the prodigal son—vivid, unforgettable stories, doctrine in action, which is the only form in which it can be apprehended by the child-mind. Further, Christ even deigned to *act* that great lesson which he came to teach—that God is Love—so that the generations of his children should ever be able to *see* it.

We may note in detail our Lord's method with the Samaritan woman. She was ignorant and antagonistic, alert for slights, suspicious as is one who has been snubbed. All she saw at first was a Jew sitting by her well, a Jew and a rabbi; he would have nothing to do with her, a Samaritan

and a woman. Supposing that our Lord had given her at once the tremendous doctrinal statement with which he ended his lesson: such an idea presented with no preparation could never have taken root in her mind. The soil must be carefully prepared. So he led her, step by step, to the final announcement. First, he gave her something to do for him—a sure way of establishing a bond of sympathy. Next, he aroused her wonder and curiosity: *living water;* the idea was related to her interests and within her grasp. She longed to know more. Then, for he was a stranger to her, he showed something of his power and established his prestige. *Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet,* she cries. When the underlying idea is firmly grasped, the Great Teacher gives the definite statement, the doctrinal formula: *I am he,* the Messias.

With the learned rabbi Nicodemus our Lord's method is quite different. A cultured mind is already stored with images: it can summon them as required to illustrate abstract truths. This type of mind responds best to mental stimulus, to some problem which will call its powers into play, and this is just what our Lord gives to Nicodemus. No time need be spent in awakening interest or

inculcating reverence; he has displayed both in his demeanour. Homely stories here would be out of place; a stimulating problem is presented instead, which it will tax all the rabbi's mental faculties to solve, quickened as they are by that flick of the whip: *Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?* Here is a Teacher who will make him use his brains, bringing all his past knowledge and all his wit to bear upon the matter in hand, setting him to search out things for himself, the while supplying just that guidance without which he could never reach the solution of the mystery.

The Church has always followed her Master's methods—problems for her thinkers, and for the unlearned truths presented pageantwise. This is the method which we must use with children: vivid presentation of ideas, often cast in dramatic form, the abstract always made concrete until the individual possesses sufficient mental images to do this for himself. Further, from the age of reason onwards, problems suited to the growing mind must be presented, that the will may be trained in judgement and the mind stimulated to self-activity.

As teachers we Catholics cannot be too thankful for the definite formulas of our catechism.

They are to the religious educationist what anatomy is to the portrait-painter. It is on them that we build. The germ of the formula is the aim of the lesson, the complete formula is the summary of the lesson. It remains for us to note what particular religious truths are most easily grasped by the child at the different stages of his development, and then to present them in accordance with his predominant interests.

THE GROWTH OF RELIGIOUS IDEAS

THERE are three ways of studying the development of religious ideas in the mind of mankind : by what we know of ourselves, by what we observe in others, and by what we learn from the history of the race. From these three sources it would seem that such development is gradual and follows an ordered sequence.

"When I was a child," says St. Paul, "I understood as a child, I thought as a child." He adds that when he became a man he put away childish things ; but there is a true sense in which the things of a child always remain the things of a man. Upon the simple ideas of infancy the truth is built up ; from the alphabet of the Faith the Creed is developed in its fulness. No religious teaching (if properly presented) need be "scrapped" in after-life. Everything remains true, everything is vital to complete knowledge. The Catholic Church being the great educational body, the University of the Ages, she is *the* exponent of the doctrine of development. She has

practised this method from the very beginning, following her Master as in duty bound.

In dealing with a subject of such awful significance as the teaching of religious truth, we sorely need a sure guide. But he who formed the mind has shown us how to present the Faith at the different stages of mental growth. The child is the microcosm of the race, therefore the study of divine methods with mankind as a whole is very helpful in our dealings with the child as an individual. God's teaching of the human race shows a careful presentation of truth in an ordered development.

As the child is the epitome of the race, so his three main stages of growth may be roughly paralleled by three divisions in the history of mankind. Infancy, childhood, and adolescence are, respectively, roughly comparable with the following historical periods : from the creation of man down to the rise of Greek and Roman civilization ; from this period down to the Renaissance ; thence to the present day, Christendom being still apparently adolescent. Here it may be well to forestall a possible objection by admitting that such divisions can never be arbitrary, but must ever lie open to contradiction in detail—*e.g.*,

every race and every time can show in themselves these three divisions.

The ideas of infancy (under seven years) are intensely individualistic. This is a state of mind necessary for the child's self-preservation and development. Towards others his attitude is one of dependence and trustfulness. His personal interests centre round bodily activity. What a person or thing *does* is his chief concern. The leading characteristics of this period are : egoism for self-preservation ; activity for bodily development ; curiosity, imitation and imagination for mental development. In conformity with these interests, the religious ideas best apprehended at this age are as follows : God's power and love and his care for the individual ; simple rules of right and wrong ; things *to do* for God our Father, for our Elder Brother, for our Mother Mary. This is not the age for doctrinal formulas. Only very simple practical statements dealing with concrete things can be comprehended. We see that God taught the race in its infancy along these lines. Adam is commanded to dress the garden, to eat this, not to eat that. Noah is told to build, to do this and that. The positive rather than the negative command is used whenever possible—a rule

the value of which the modern educationist appreciates.

The first simple doctrinal formula having now been clearly explained by concrete examples, it is put into words for Abraham : "I am the Almighty God." The patriarchs are given tangible proofs of the Divine love and care, coupled with definite directions as to their own conduct. Moses is taught the same simple doctrine : "I am the God of thy father," and the Decalogue itself contains no addition to it. With but little expansion, this remains the sole doctrinal teaching up to the coming of the Messias. The early Hebrews thought that Jehovah was their own private property, as it were, their tribal God ; and it is only the later prophets who have a dim idea that he is also the God of the nations. The infant mind is purely egoistic and cannot comprehend either altruistic or abstract ideas. It is noteworthy, also, that there is no *explanation* of commands at this period, for cause and effect in the abstract cannot be grasped before the age of reason. Therefore the race is now governed by "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not," with corresponding rewards and punishments.

Our analogy does not admit of a hard and fast

demarcation line ; but the childhood of the race would seem to begin with the culture of Greece and Rome, and to extend through the Middle Ages down to the Renaissance. From seven years onwards the child's reasoning power develops, and from eight or nine years up to twelve or thirteen years his ability to memorize is at its height. Moreover, he is now intensely interested in *facts,* and he has a sense of law due to the organization of his facts. He understands cause and effect and wants to know the reason for everything (compare the attitude of the Athenians in St Paul's day with the continual "why" of the child). Further, the child is now influenced by his social environment. He is aware of other people besides himself, though he is still chiefly interested in them for their relationship to himself. He will frequently boast about the skill of a father or the prowess of a brother, but it is always that he himself may shine in the reflected glory. He still prefers the concrete to the abstract, but his imagination is vivid.

From these characteristics it will be seen that this is the age for the accumulation and organization of facts and the memorization of formulas. Let us mark the divine method. In infancy the race had

learnt the first article of the Creed ; in childhood it must learn the whole Creed. Therefore God the Son, as it were, first gives mankind *a demonstration lesson*. By his life on earth he shows the Creed in action, then he allows time for the Faith to be realized and *expressed—i.e.*, by *living* it—and lastly the doctrinal formula is given. The first three Gospels set forth the Faith in vivid stories ; the Fourth Gospel, written many years later, gives the doctrines underlying those stories.

The master-mind of St Paul crystallizes the Faith into definite statements, and all through the ensuing period great theologians continually expand and develop the Church's teaching. The three Creeds are each formulated only after their contents have been apprehended, and the two later ones in answer to questionings of the mind of the times. The age demanded the classification of facts and the formulation of dogmas—witness the work of St Augustine of Hippo, Duns Scotus, St Thomas Aquinas, and many others. But the main interests of mankind were still egoistic. The wide, altruistic view does not develop before adolescence. Compare the Crusades with our present-day Foreign Missions. Spiritual, if not temporal, aggrandizement inspired the Holy

Wars. Christendom wanted to rescue the holy places for its own advantage : it had no thought for the conversion of the pagans. Until that period which we have termed the adolescence of the race, only a few of the greatest minds realized that a heathen soul might also be a holy place worth rescuing.

We might sum up the characteristics of the three periods by saying that the infant is most interested in what a thing *does,* the child in what a thing *is,* and the adolescent in what a thing *means.* Further, the infant chiefly realizes God's relationship to himself, the child is aware of his relationship to God, and the adolescent acknowledges a relationship both to God and to his fellows.

In adolescence the individual is re-made, and he will re-make his environment to suit his needs. Hence comes human progress. But if the preceding stages of intellectual development have been rightly handled, this re-making will take the form of evolution rather than revolution. At this period the reasoning power is greatly increased, the æsthetic faculties develop, a strong social instinct is born, and the callous cruelty of childhood (so noticeable in the previous age) now gives

place to altruism. Hero-worship is intense, and there is remarkable organizing ability. Whereas the child is interested only in the present, the adolescent develops a time sense and the consequent historical perspective so necessary for construction and re-construction.

We can note the growth of all these characteristics in mankind during the last three hundred years, but it is difficult to survey this period because it seems likely that we are still in the middle of it. Feminism and anti-feminism would appear to be a proof of this. In childhood the sexes are mutually indifferent, but in early adolescence antagonism precedes the ensuing attraction. Other signs of racial adolescence are the intellectual revolutions which at first led to heresies and now tend towards paganism, together with the social instinct which has abolished much of the cruelty once so prevalent.

The divine method with adolescent Christendom would seem to be to let it solve its problems for itself as far as possible, working out the pros and cons, arguing the point from every side, and then finally bringing the problem to the Infallible Teacher for ratification or solution. The mental calibre of this period resents dictation ; the mind

needs to grapple with its difficulties and grow strong through exercise. Hence, whereas the facts of the Faith, founded upon revelation and reason, are accepted by all Catholics, the Church gives her children great liberty in the discussion of new problems as they arise, and a papal pronouncement itself is usually the formulation of a dogma already universally believed by the faithful —*i.e.*, worked out for themselves with the help of suggestions from their teacher.

As the patriarchs represent the trustful dependence of infancy, and the schoolmen exhibit childhood's love of organized facts and exact definitions, so such outstanding figures as St Ignatius Loyola, St Teresa and St Francis Xavier display the ideals, the altruism, the social instinct and the organizing ability of adolescence. If we are right in our surmise as to the present stage of human development, what may we not expect from the manhood of Christendom?

Our blessed Lord was at pains to show us that the Catholic Faith is an organic growth, not a manufactured article. The mustard seed must be sown, in the right soil and under the right conditions; it must be given time to grow, and then in due season the birds of the air will find shelter in

its branches. Every strong faith, which blesses its possessor and those around him, must develop in like manner. If you transplant a full-grown tree it will die. The Faith must be planted in the child as God planted it in the race, otherwise one of two results is likely to occur: either the seed will never develop properly, remaining a stunted and useless growth, or the attempt to transplant a mature tree will eventuate in its speedy death.

The undeveloped growth resembles the case of a man who, in middle life or old age, still retains his childish, egoistical idea of God, considering the Deity merely as a Being responsible for his personal needs, convinced of God's duty to *him,* but quite oblivious himself of *his* duty to God and to his neighbour. Such a man will tell you that he goes to church "to get good," and will complain bitterly, as one who has been unlawfully defrauded, if the sermon be not to his liking. His prayers will be personal petitions only, and he will be totally uninterested in the welfare of the Church at large. In spiritual matters his reasoning power, his perspective, and his altruism are quite undeveloped. Such cases are common in Protestant communities. Seed of an indifferent quality has been scattered haphazard on unpre-

pared soil and grown up at the mercy of thorns and briars.

On the other hand, the transplantation of a full-grown tree is comparable with the attempt to teach a doctrine before the child is of an age to understand it, and in a manner unsuited to his mental growth and divorced from his interests. The result is likely to be that he throws over religion altogether. The tree has no roots in the soil, and after a while it withers away. We know that lapsed Catholics exist.

No part of religious truth is taught once for all. Every truth is re-set and re-presented as the mind develops, and the scholar at the end of a long life is still aware that he has not exhausted the meaning of the simple words of prayer which he lisped at his mother's knee.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD'S CREED

THE spiritual development of the child follows an ordered sequence, just as his physical development does. The Church has always emphasized the essential unity of body and soul ; and this truth is the key to most of the problems of religious education. The natural instincts have their spiritual complements.

Some exponents of the New Psychology argue that mankind can never escape from the conflict between his primitive animal nature and the sanctions of his social environment, thus implying that man, alone of all the creatures upon earth, is denied a full and perfect life. As Catholics, we recognize both the truth and the error of this argument. We know the source of the conflict —the fall of Adam ; but we know, too, that "as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." The natural instincts of mankind can find their full expression on the supernatural plane.

For example : the psycho-analyst points out that war neurosis was caused by the instinct of

self-preservation coming into conflict with the ethical and social standard of the nation, but on the supernatural plane the preservation of the one does not interfere with the welfare of the many. The man who sees his life in its true perspective is not greatly concerned about the prolongation of its earthly period. Thus, though the conflict with the lower nature has always to be faced, as St Paul reminds us, yet the strain is greatly lessened when man can find complete self-expression through his higher nature. It is the privilege and the responsibility of the teacher of religion to train the individual for this perfect self-expression, and this training should begin in infancy, for a branch can only be bent when it is green.

When you are sailing a boat you are dependent upon the winds, but though you cannot change their currents you can trim your sails. To attain his end the teacher must vary his methods according to the predominant interests of the child. The driving-powers of the three main periods may be roughly classified thus : in infancy, self-preservation ; in childhood, self-development ; in adolescence, self-realization.

In order that the full-grown Christian " may be

perfect, furnished to every good work,'' the catechumen must be instructed from two sources—doctrine and history. We want the child to understand and memorize the catechism, and to know the life of our Lord, the stories from the Old Testament, and the main facts of Church history from the Acts of the Apostles onwards, including, of course, the lives of the greater saints. Teachers have remarked that it is difficult to find time to teach all this history as well as doctrine, but the solution of the difficulty lies in teaching the doctrine by means of the history, to the immense advantage of both studies.

For example: the inexperience and helplessness of the young child make him self-centred and dependent, therefore his religious instruction should consist of stories of God's power and love and care, from the Old and New Testaments and the lives of the saints. By this means he will learn the two first articles of the Creed. A doctrine is not taught to a child by a form of words, but by making the truth of it live before him. The child realizes God as Creator and Father when he is shown God acting with power and love. Every story should therefore be narrated with a definite aim in view. The underlying truth will

be suggested rather than explicitly stated. To point a moral is often to overshoot the mark.

When teaching little children much use should be made of sight, touch, etc. Stories should be illustrated by pictures, blackboard sketches and models, or the scene arranged in a sand-tray. The narrative should be graphic and short, told in simple words and concerned only with *actions,* never with feelings, descriptions of scenery, etc., which are outside the comprehension of the young child.

The child should be encouraged to express the story for himself as soon as he has heard it. This will impress it on his memory and will also enable the teacher to see what he has grasped or missed. Words will be difficult for him as a medium of expression, but he can draw or model or dramatize his impressions. An inexperienced teacher once told the story of Adam and Eve to some small children, using the word "serpent" without explaining its meaning. When the class afterwards drew the story, one child put in three figures. Upon being asked what the third figure represented, he replied: "That's the servant." Had that child not been given "expression-work" that day, he might for years have been under the im-

pression that a little maid-of-all-work was the cause of "man's first disobedience."

The age of childhood—from eight years to twelve or thirteen years—is *the* period for the accumulation of facts and the memorizing of formulas. Self-development comes by knowledge, imitation, and experiment. The child is eager to learn and to do. The Creed may be learnt by studying the lives of Christ and his saints; and the Commandments are well illustrated by stories from the Old Testament. As each doctrine is taught, by concrete examples, it is memorized in the words of the catechism. For example: Jesus Christ is shown as Son of God by a course of lessons on his power over the forces of evil, over nature, disease and death. The marks of the Church may be taught by showing that Saul the persecutor found the Church to be One, Saul the Christian found her to be holy, St Peter showed her to be Catholic, and St Paul the missionary proved her to be both Catholic and apostolic. The memory work here would be the catechism answers 94-99. In the same way, a course on the first commandment might show Noah worshipping God by hope, Abraham by faith, Moses by charity, and Gedeon by true reli-

gion ; or the tenth commandment can be explained by the contrasting lessons of Naboth's vineyard and Ruth. Such lessons will not be merely a narrative by the teacher. The child will help to build them up by discussion, by finding references, reading extracts, telling what he knows already, bringing assignments, etc., according to his ability. Maps and pictures and models will be a great help. In every instruction time must be allowed for the child's own self-activity.

The adolescent needs to re-learn and re-set his faith. He must realize his position in, and contribution to, the history of the race. With pupils of this age the class might well become a study circle or "self-teaching" class. A problem will be set and assignments prepared by the scholars. The history of the Chosen People and of the Catholic Church will now be studied as a whole, with the life of Christ our Lord in detail, and the missionary work of St Paul. The Sacraments will also receive special attention, and may be studied in the light of Old Testament ritual, while the ceremonies of the Church will be further illustrated from history. A study of comparative religions would also be more valuable, and foreign missions must receive due attention.

Studied in some such ways as these, the dry bones of doctrine will live, and the great realities will become an integral part of life. We cannot afford to send our children out into the world with the Bread of Life in sealed packets. We have no guarantee that they will break the seal when hungry, despite our injunctions so to do writ large upon the labels. The paths they tread are overhung with gaudy fruits, "fair to the eyes," and apparently "good to eat," and if the true bread be given them in such a form that it awakens no appetite, it is but too probable that in after-years they will strive to satisfy their hunger with "that which is not bread."

SELF-ACTIVITY IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

"DEVELOPMENT by self-activity" is the watchword of the modern educationist, it being now universally recognized that education is a matter of co-operation between teacher and taught. You may bring the horse to the water or the water to the horse, but the element is clearly useless unless the animal will drink, even though, justly incensed, you throw it in his face.

We can only make knowledge our own by using it. "Between 'understanding' because another person seeks to impress upon us the explanation of a thing by speech, and 'understanding' the thing of ourselves, there is an immeasurable distance,"* says Madam Montessori, and she lets her children work out their own salvation by means of didactic apparatus. She presents suitable material to her pupils in such a manner that they are able to grasp its use and further their own development by handling it. Needless to say, however, the child

* *The Advanced Montessori Method,* p. 215.

is not left without guidance even in the manipulation of this concrete material. Unlike the animals, man cannot develop without assistance. He is the heir of the wisdom of the ages, and his mental and spiritual food must be prepared with a care at least equal to that bestowed upon his physical nourishment.

In Victorian times there was a lesson-book entitled "Reading without Tears," and the ultra-modern educationist desires to bring out a similar manual on behalf of the overburdened teacher. If "tears" are synonymous with hard work, we may tell him at once that it cannot be done. To teach children to teach themselves is the most difficult branch of a difficult art. But no true teacher expects a "soft job." Certainly a good deal of the work has been done for the Montessori teacher in the immense care expended upon the didactic apparatus, but even so she does not find her position a sinecure. We must not look to the self-activity of the child as a means of lessening the self-activity of the teacher. The two must work together, and the more the one works the more will the other work too.

The child must teach himself, even from his earliest years, if he is really to learn. But when

we are dealing with religious education how shall we give him material of which he can make personal use? It is obvious that, when concerned with revealed truth, we cannot leave a scholar entirely to "self-teaching." The solution lies in giving verbal presentation as material, when the particular idea which we wish to teach cannot be gathered from the books and pictures and maps, etc., at the disposal of our pupils.

In teaching Christian doctrine there must always be a considerable proportion of verbal presentation, because doctrines are ideas, and ideas are taught by facts revealed in a certain way. The comprehension of the idea frequently depends upon the presentation of the fact. For instance, if our aim is to teach a child, who can read and write easily, the details of the life of Abraham, we can set him a series of passages to read, maps and pictures to study, questions to answer, etc. But if we wish to show that "by faith he abode in the land of promise . . . for he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," we must present the life of the patriarch from that point of view.

Our knowledge of doctrine, and our recognition of the illustrative value of historical incidents,

come from study and personal reflection, and it is this which colours verbal presentation and makes it (if of any use at all) valuable in a way in which the child's own researches can never be. On the other hand, the most skilful presentation is quite valueless if it does not stimulate the scholar's mind to individual work. What we aim at is this: never to do for the child what he can usefully do for himself, but carefully to supply the necessary knowledge which study and thought have placed at our command.

With children under seven the material will be presented vividly in story form, but great use will be made of pictures and models, and the child will be encouraged to find out as much as possible of the subject in hand by his individual effort. He will then reproduce the story, or some part of it, in some way—by free drawing, in the sand-tray, with clay, paper, or some other material. Children and teacher together can sometimes dramatize the story.

From eight to ten or eleven, the child will help to build up the lesson. Narrative will be broken by discussion, simple problems will be set, maps, pictures, models, etc., examined and described, references found, passages copied. According to

his age and ability the child will then express something of the lesson for himself, by such means as symbolic drawing, group work in the sand-tray, or the making of a poster-picture (figures, etc., cut out and pasted on a large sheet of cardboard), map-making with plasticine or paper pulp, picture-map drawing, illuminating, simple model-making, occasional dramatization and essay-writing.

This "expression work" is the re-formation of the material, an act of personal creation, all "creative" acts of mankind being but a re-assembling of existing material. Just as the Montessori child re-assembles his insets and evolves new patterns, so by "expression work" the child associates ideas and discovers new truths. As he works we may see in full flower that silent absorption which so delights Madam Montessori. There are three ways in which this self-expression on the part of the child is specially valuable: (1) activity makes for self-development; (2) the reproduction of a mental impression fixes it in the mind; (3) the child's self-expression is a guide to the teacher. She passes from child to child and receives individual accounts and summaries of the lesson as she discussses the individual work.

As soon as a child can read and write easily he is capable of working out assignments which have been carefully drawn up to amplify the teacher's group lessons. Some children of ten and eleven delight to work on this method, but twelve or thirteen is usuallly a better age to begin a study circle, or "self-teaching" class. Each scholar is given a scheme of work bearing upon the subject in hand; this he carries out at his own pace and in his own manner, referring to his teacher for help in any difficulty. Group lessons, of course, always precede the scholar's individual researches, and to facilitate these he should have a considerable amount of apparatus, books, maps, pictures, etc.—such material, in short, as a teacher would use in getting up a well-prepared lesson; and the "Scholar's Guide," or written scheme of work, is a guide-book on the use of this material. For example, after an instruction on the Sacrament of Penance, the pupils might be given assignments which illustrate the doctrine from the Old and New Testaments.

To sum up: the canonical rule in teaching is never to do for the scholar that which he can well do for himself; but in religious education it is important to bear in mind that the point of view

from which facts are seen influences the interpretation of those facts, and that therefore skilful presentation must always be an important factor in the teaching of Christian doctrine.

THE APOLOGETIC VALUE OF FOLK-TALES

IT would seem that the next big attack upon religion is to be led by the anthropologist and the psychologist, who maintain that their respective sciences adequately prove it to be but an emanation from the mind of man—he desires the ideal, therefore he creates it; the Christian faith is merely another attempt to provide an anæsthetic for the troubles of this life; man, craving happiness, constructs for himself an eternity of bliss.

But if it be admitted that there is this universal desire for eternal happiness, a great point is gained for the Christian apologist, it being contrary to the law of nature that there should be in existence a faculty which can never have an opportunity of functioning. Just as the construction of the eye would be evidence of the existence of light, so man's yearning for eternal beatitude proves the possibility of such a state. One of the strongest

proofs that such a craving exists may be found in the old folk-tales which we know as the fairy stories of childhood. It is interesting to note how exactly these old tales are allegories of Christian truths.

There are three main ideas underlying these classic stories. First, the virtuous person who is accounted poor and of no esteem, but who is eventually found to possess the pearl of great price. We call to mind Cinderella and her Norse equivalent, Jack the Cindersifter. Jack, the stupid younger brother, wins through a brave act three fine horses and suits of armour, which he conceals in a secret place. When the Princess on the glass hill awaits the suitor who shall ride up to fetch her, Jack, on three successive days, mounted and clad as becomes a knight, bears away the golden apple from her hand. Then, when all the manhood of the kingdom is summoned to the royal palace that the successful suitor may be found, Jack appears in his rags and, casting them off, stands in knightly attire with the apples in his hand.

Here is a parallel with Cinderella and her glass slipper, and further, with the faithful Christian in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be

revealed. This type of story has its counterpart, also, in the ancient belief in the alchemist, with his crucible and philosopher's stone which turned everything to gold. These magic secrets are commonplaces of the Christian life.

The second idea is that of the imprisoned Princess and the rescuing knight, of which the Sleeping Beauty is typical; and what can furnish a truer picture of the scheme of salvation? The Princess-soul, by evil enchantments sunk in the sleep of ignorance and sin, powerless to help herself, is surrounded by those who are as powerless as she. There can be no help for her save from outside, and how can she be rescued through the thorn-hedge of indifference, sloth and sinful habits? Who should care or dare to tear his way through? There comes One who so cares and dares, who breaks through at great cost to himself, bearing for ever the marks of that struggle; and at his kiss the Princess awakes, and the silent, stagnant world around her is filled with life, and all things take on new beauty and new meaning. Then she learns that this palace, beautiful though it be, is not her home. Her Lover has his face set otherwhere, and she asks him:

"And whither goest thou, tell me where?"

And he answers :

> " O seek my father's court with me,
> For there are greater wonders there."

Then follows a picture of the contemplative life :

> " And o'er the hills, and far away,
> Beyond their utmost purple rim,
> Beyond the night, across the day,
> Through all the world she followed him."

The third main idea is that of the Prince in disguise. He would be loved for himself alone, therefore he comes to his beloved as a beggar, or even in deeper abasement, as in " Beauty and the Beast." It is the kiss of love which sets his beauty free.

Can the apparently trivial shadow forth mysteries ? Surely it may when our Lord himself used the homely simile of the hen and her chickens to show the love of God to man. May we not, then, when considering this folk-tale of the disguised lover, reverently call to mind that great prophecy : " There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness ; and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him. Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity : and his look was as it

were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not."

Our blessed Lord carries his disguise further yet. The Blessed Sacrament is surely a touch-stone for love, a veritable beggar-garment which only the eye of true love can pierce.

These age-old stories, these racial beliefs, would appear to have considerable apologetic value. There is a type of mind which seems unable to accept the claims of Christianity because it judges it to be outside the development of human needs. Such a person is really searching for truth, but he distrusts the supernatural. If we can show him that religion satisfies a deep and instinctive need of mankind, and that the supernatural is also supremely natural, he may be brought to consider it.

The underlying semblance between these folk-tales and the Christian verities has a very great value, also, for teachers of religion. We know how eagerly these stories are believed and loved by children, who are now more or less at that stage of development where the race was when it gave these beliefs that form. To the child it is perfectly natural and right that Cinderella, the despised younger sister, should be the belle of the

ball and the chosen of the Prince. The Sleeping Beauty, thorn-encircled, presupposes a rescuer. The very grotesqueness of the Beast guarantees some delightful revelation. To the child the supernatural is indeed supremely natural. Here is a magnificent foundation laid ready for the teacher, and one upon which he may build in all security.

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